

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Interview With Wire Reporters on Haiti

September 14, 1994

The President. I asked you in here today because I want to talk a little about Haiti. As you know, I am going to address the country tomorrow night, and I will have more to say then. But I wanted to emphasize the interests of the United States and the values of the United States that are at stake in this situation and to just remind you and, through you, the American people of what the United States has done here for the last 3 years.

Let me begin by saying that the report of the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, John Shattuck, yesterday highlights the interest we have there that has gotten so much worse. This is plainly the most brutal, the most violent regime anywhere in our hemisphere. They have perpetrated a reign of terror in Haiti, and it is getting worse.

I just had a long meeting with John Shattuck, and he left me, just for example, these pictures as illustrative of what is going on there that you may want to look at, of people who have been killed: This man killed in the slums, in Port-au-Prince, disemboweled in the—[inaudible]; this man, a distinguished supporter of the elected President, dragged out of church and murdered; this woman horribly disfigured. And we have examples now of the slaughter of orphans, the killing of a priest, in small towns killing people and dismembering them and then burying them and leaving parts of their bodies to stick out to terrify people. We have clear examples of widespread use of political rape, that is, rape against wives and daughters to intimidate people, children included. We now know there have been over 3,000—well over 3,000 political murders since the military coup occurred.

So the human rights violations and the situation there, right on our backdoor, is very, very significant.

The second point I'd like to make is that the United States clearly has an interest in preventing another massive outflow of refugees, which are plainly going to flow from

this if the international community does not act to put an end to it. We already have over 14,000 Haitian refugees at Guantanamo; many thousands of others have come——

Q. How many?

The President. Over 14,000. Many thousands of others had come to the shores of the United States or attempted to, as you know. We're going to have a massive immigration problem that we will have to pay for, with thousands of dislocated people.

The third thing I want to emphasize is a point that has been made repeatedly to me by leaders in the region, in the Caribbean, and has been echoed by the person who was in charge of Latin American policy under the previous administration, and that is that we have a decided interest in seeing democracy succeed in Haiti. We have now 33 of the 35 countries in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America are democratic governments. Cuba is not and has not been for a very long time. But Haiti is the only one where there was an election and then a military coup negated it. Ninety percent of the people in Haiti voted; 67 percent of the people voted for President Aristide.

As the leaders in the region, particularly in the Caribbean, have pointed out to me repeatedly in my conversations with them, democracy is not a done deal all over this region. And if this is allowed to stand after all this brutality, all this evidence of violations of international law and human conscience, then democracies elsewhere will be more fragile.

That is important to us, not only because of security concerns. We look toward the 21st century, and we know what our problems are going to be. We know we're going to have problems with small-scale weapons of mass destruction. We know we're going to have problems with terrorism. And we know that democracies are far less likely to tolerate that sort of thing than dictatorships are. Furthermore, we know that an enormous percentage of our economic growth and prosperity is tied to the growth of democracy and an open trading system south of our borders. And we have to keep it going. So those three things, human rights, immigration, democracy, are very important.

I'd like to mention just one other thing that is equally important, and that is the reliability of the United States and the United Nations once we say we're going to do something. And let me go through the chronology here. You will remember, first of all, when this coup occurred, President Bush said that this was a serious threat to our national security interests. Secretary of State Baker said that the coup could not be allowed to stand.

We worked hard on a nonviolent solution, on a peaceful solution to this with the United Nations called the Governors Island accord, which was signed in the United States. It was an agreement, in effect, all the parties made with the United States and the United Nations. On the day it was supposed to be carried out, the military leaders broke their word to the United States and to the United Nations.

We then went back and pursued sanctions and the tightening of sanctions. We did everything we could to avoid any kind of confrontation of force. And what has happened? The sanctions have made the Haitians poorer. They have not undermined the resolve of the dictators to keep milking the country dry in perpetrating their reign of terror. They have instead led to continued terrorism, the expulsion of the U.N. human rights monitors, the refusal of the dictators to see the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. All that has happened.

Meanwhile, the Security Council Resolution 940 has approved all necessary measures to restore democracy and has called for a two-phase process, one in which the leaders would be removed and there would be an immediate beginning of retraining the police force and a period when a multinational force would attempt to stabilize the situation there, restore President Aristide, and establish a security force that is reliable. And then within a matter of a few months, the mission would be turned over to the United Nations itself to stay until the Presidential election in '95 and the inauguration of a new President in '96. The multinational force mission, in other words, that the United States is called upon to spearhead is a limited one.

The international community is exhausted. Not very long ago—I mean, their patience

is exhausted. The Secretary-General of the U.N. himself said the time for diplomacy had finished.

Now, just in the last few weeks, we have had more than 20 countries say that they would participate with us in the first stages of this, in the multinational force, in retraining the police force, operating as police monitors, trying to maintain security while we normalize the situation there. More countries are willing to come into the U.N. mission to stay for a longer period of time, until the election is held and a new President is installed.

The United States has an interest, it seems to me, in the post-cold-war world in not letting dictators break their word to the United States and to the United Nations, especially in our backyard. We have supported other countries taking the lead in other areas of the world where their interests are directly at stake. The Europeans overwhelmingly, principally aided by the Canadians, have been in Bosnia. The Russians sent a force into Georgia at the request of the Government of Georgia but willing to abide by United Nations standards.

Here is a case where the entire world community has spoken on a matter in our backyard involving horrible human rights violations, the threat of serious immigration displacement in the United States, the destabilization of democracy in our hemisphere when it's going along so well, and the total fracturing of the ability of the world community to conduct business in the post-cold-war era. Those are the things that are at stake here. And it seems to me that we have literally exhausted every available alternative. And the time has come for those people to get out of there.

Now, there is still—they can still leave. They do not have to push this to a confrontation. But our interests are clear; the support is astonishing. We have countries all over the world on every continent willing to come to be a part of this because they are appalled by what's going on.

But the flipside of this is that the United States must not be in a position to walk away from a situation like this in our backyard while we expect others to lead the way in their backyard, as long as the United Nations

has approved of an operation. And yet, people are coming from all over the world to be a part of this, to rebuild Haiti because they understand the significance of it.

That is my case. There is no point in going any further with the present policy. The time has come for them to go, one way or the other.

Q. Why give them the pass, Mr. President, if they're responsible for such horrific deeds as this, to allow them at this stage free passage out of Haiti?

The President. Well, I happen to have two answers to that. First of all, we are interested in bringing an end to the violence; violence may tend to beget violence. And secondly, President Aristide himself supports this. Keep in mind, President Aristide has been willing all along to follow the spirit and the letter of the Governors Island Agreement. In the Governors Island Agreement the military leaders and the police leaders were promised safe exit. And yes, this is horrible, but the most important thing we can do is to quickly create a spirit of reconciliation and to try to move to a point where we can do that.

Now, if they don't leave, of course, then they are vulnerable to being handed over to the authorities and being held accountable for whatever their role was, their respective roles were, in the kinds of things that have occurred. But anyway, those are my two answers.

Q. Mr. President, are you going to fix a deadline by which they must leave or the United States is going to take action? How imminent is something?

The President. Well, I'll have a little more to say about that tomorrow night. But I don't want to talk about any specific date. All I can tell you is that the time is at hand. They need to leave, and they're going to leave one way or the other.

Q. Does that mean you are going to give a deadline?

The President. That means that it wouldn't be responsible for me to discuss that question at this moment.

Q. Is it a matter of days or weeks?

The President. I don't want to get into the time.

Q. Are you going to—is this an ultimatum? You've said they must go, they have to go, they have—and so forth. All of these words amount to, in fact, that you have made a decision to invade Haiti.

The President. No, that decision is up to them. My decision is that it's time for them to go. We have tried every other option. We now have an enormous array of international support for a problem that is on our doorstep.

Q. But you don't have any support in this country.

The President. Well, you know, it's interesting. When we had the—let me just remind you about the—let me say first of all what's important.

I am concerned about that, and I am sorry that the polls are the way they are. But my job as the President is to take the information that I have and the facts that I know and do what I believe is best for our national security interests. And I believe it is best—in fact, I think it is very important, for the reasons I have stated, for us to resolve this matter and to do it now. That is what I believe. And I hope that I can persuade the American people that I am right. But my job in this case, where I have access to a lot of facts and evidence, is to make that decision and to go forward.

I also would remind you that these polls come and go. There was a poll at the height of the immigration crisis which said, by 51 percent to 17 percent, the people of America would support our going in there to restore democracy if it were part of a United Nations effort. And clearly, when the immigration crisis abated, it abated not simply because we established safe havens outside the United States, it abated because it was part of a process that the Haitian people thought was going to lead to a resolution of this crisis.

If we walk away from this and these things keep happening, you're going to see another explosion of immigration, I am convinced, with far, far more people than the 14,000 that are at Guantanamo today that the American taxpayers are supporting, that are in a terrible situation. And we will have to see—it's going to be a very difficult situation.

Q. So you'll move even if you don't have Congress or the American people behind you

because you think that they will rally once you have made them?

The President. No, I think my job—look, I have taken on a lot of tough fights since I have been here, and I believe that the country is going to be better off because of them. And in a matter like this, I believe that if the American people knew everything that I knew on this—and I think as they know more, I think more of them will agree with me. But regardless, this is what I believe is the right thing to do. I realize it is unpopular. I know it is unpopular. I know the timing is unpopular. I know the whole thing is unpopular. But I believe it is the right thing. I have been working on this hard since the day I took office. Indeed, I began to work on it before I took office. I was trying to continue the policy not only that I felt was right but that my predecessor said was right. He said it was a serious threat to our security.

We were very reasonable. We went through that whole Governors Island thing. We agreed, because they wanted it, to lightly arm our soldiers and the French and the Canadians, the others that were part of Governors Island. And then we showed up to implement the Governors Island Agreement. And because we were lightly armed, because we had agreed to do that, and because we had agreed to come on conditions of mutual willingness, they broke the deal while we were literally on the point of landing, the United Nations.

We did not invade them then; we did not resort to violence then. Instead, we went back and got a consensus of the international community. We dealt with the refugee crisis. We ended the policy of direct return of refugees. And we went to the sanctions, and we did everything we could. And all of our efforts resulted in more of this, more of this. And it is wrong for us to permit more of this when the United Nations authorized us 50 days ago to act—50 days ago they authorized us. I have tried for 50 more days. And when we got support from countries—we will talk about it some more tomorrow, but we have an amazing array of countries who believe this is right.

I think when the American people know the facts of this, they will be supportive. And as I said, no decision has been made to use

force. That decision is in the hands of the people in Haiti; they can still leave. But they've got to go.

Q. Is there any signal from Port-au-Prince saying that General Cédras could leave?

The President. What?

Q. Is there any signal coming out of Port-au-Prince saying that he could leave?

The President. I don't know what's going to happen there.

Q. Have you had any signals?

Q. Before the Persian Gulf war, President Bush sent Secretary Baker for one final, last meeting, an emissary, with Tariq 'Aziz and said, "This is it. You've got to go within"—I think he prescribed some kind of deadline. Some of your supporters say that you should make one last stab at this; send an emissary. Is that something—do you endorse that idea?

The President. I don't want to say anymore today about all of that. I just want to say that I think I have shown already extreme good faith and forbearance in the face of dictators who broke their word to America, broke their word to the United Nations, permitted gross brutalization of their own people, and are exercising a destabilizing force in our region when we need to be supportive of democracy. I have shown forbearance.

We will deal with those questions—that question and questions like it—in an appropriate fashion. And they, I hope, will make the right decision.

Q. Well, are you sending President Carter, by any chance, who seems to be a world peacemaker? I mean, giving him a chance to meet with Cédras?

The President. There is nothing to meet about, unless they are leaving. If they are leaving and they want to discuss things, well, that's a different issue.

But the time has come for them to go. I am not interested in sending anybody down there to try to talk them into doing something that they plainly will not be talked into doing in a reasonable, fair, humane way.

They broke their word on Governors Island. I was prepared, fully committed, to see that the amnesty provision was honored, that they and the people that they were associated with were protected. I had no intention of supporting any international aid to Haiti if the Governors Island Agreement was not

honored. We still are committed to a spirit of reconciliation and to putting an end to this. I know that there will be pressures for other kinds of violence when the change occurs. People don't suffer this kind of thing and not want to retaliate. We are committed to—the international community is, the U.N. is, all these countries that are willing to go in are committed to trying to put an end to this.

Q. Even at the price of American lives?

The President. Well, I hope there won't be a loss of American lives. But the United States went into not only Desert Storm but went in—in our hemisphere, where we have a special interest—went into both Panama and Grenada in a conflict without United Nations support, without United Nations—an outright request and certainly without 20 other countries supporting an endeavor.

I think that, therefore, our interests are clear and certainly as compelling here as they were there.

Q. Have there been any signals at all, any feelers from—[inaudible]

The President. You've seen enough from the films to know that we have been doing preparations. And we will do everything we can under all circumstances always to minimize any risk to American lives.

Q. Have there been any signals at all, any feelers from Cédras and the others, that at long last they're ready to go?

The President. All I can tell you is that the issue as we stand tonight is how I have presented it to you. And I'll have more to say tomorrow night.

Q. What about a congressional vote? If that happens, if there is a congressional vote and it goes against you, would you ignore that?

The President. Well, we've had—first of all, I'm not convinced that that's going to happen, but secondly, we have had seven debates about it. The 1994 appropriations bill actually provided—if you will remember—provided a procedure by which the United States could move, along with the U.N., and file a detailed report about what was going on.

I do want to emphasize this, because I think this is a legitimate concern of Congress and the American people: What is our mission? If we lead this multinational force, what

is our mission? Our mission is to get the dictators out; bring the police monitors in from these other countries to help maintain the peace; begin to retrain a Haitian police force to be responsible, supportive of democracy, and to prevent violence, not participate in it; restore the elected President; and turn the mission over to the U.N. as quickly as we can. Then there would be a U.N. mission in which the United States would participate but at a much reduced level, which would stay there until the election occurs next year and the new President is inaugurated early '96.

In other words, we have very limited objectives. We are not trying to win military conquest. We have no interest in that at all. And we are not responsible in any way, shape, or form for rebuilding Haiti. This is not a nation building operation. It is not a traditional peacekeeping operation. Our responsibility would be limited to removing the dictators, bringing in the police monitors from other countries, retraining the police force, restoring the President, turning it over to the U.N.

The nation building, so-called nation building, would have to be done by the international aid institutions. You should know, by the way—because one of the questions that will be asked is, how do we know that we'll be on a more positive path—there was a meeting in Paris a few days ago. There was a commitment to give over \$1 billion in aid to Haiti when democracy is restored, when the dictators leave, if conditions of reconciliation exist.

Q. If force has to be used, how many troops would be involved and how long would they have to—

The President. I'm not going to discuss the details of that. It would not be responsible. I'll have some more to say about it tomorrow night.

Q. Your exit strategy?

The President. Absolutely.

Q. I was going to say that—

The President. Absolutely, a disciplined and clear one. There is. That's what I'm trying to say. This is, there is—first of all, the whole U.N. mission will be over when the next Presidential election is held in '95. That's when the U.N. mission is over. The

U.S. responsibility as head of a multinational force would be over in a couple of months, as soon as we could do those things I said, remove the dictators, retrain the police, let the police monitors maintain order, restore the President, turn it over to the U.N. It could be done in a matter of a couple of months.

You know, it is very important that it be limited. The nation building must done by the international financial institutions. They have a plan that I think will work.

Baseball Strike

Q. Mr. President, a purely domestic issue, as you probably know, Bud Selig has announced that the baseball season is over with no World Series. Do you think the antitrust exemption should be removed from baseball at this point because of the situation?

The President. I don't want to give you a definite answer, but it's something that I think ought to be looked at. The reason I don't want to give you a definite answer is that I have not had a chance to study that issue in detail or to get any kind of advice from the Justice Department. But I think that if for the first time in history we're not going to have a World Series, and if we have ended what could have been the best baseball season in 50 years—I might say, you know, we tried. We had the Federal Mediation Service in there. The Secretary of Labor worked very hard. The White House worked very hard. We did everything we could. If this has just turned into another business in America, then that's an issue, it seems to me, that has to be examined. But I cannot give a definitive answer at this moment for the simple reason that I have not had adequate time to study it or get a recommendation from the Attorney General, so I should not do that. But I don't see how we can avoid a serious examination of it in light of what has happened now to the American people.

Press Secretary Myers. Next question.

Haiti

Q. You sound very angry.

The President. Well, I believe that the United States—I think there's no question, about what you said, about the whole issue about the public support—but that's because

immigration has gotten off the front page and the nature of the U.N. commitment got off the front page. And I understand that, and I'm sympathetic, and we were doing a lot of other things in America, you know, a lot of things at home. But, you know, we asked for this report from the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights. He gave it to me. Just in the last few days we had the New York Times story on the orphans being killed. It's just getting worse, and I am—I am very angry.

Those people gave their word to the United States and the United Nations at Governors Island. And we gave our word to them. We kept our word to them. They broke their word to us. They went about committing this kind of atrocity. And I have bent over backwards. I have used sanctions and everything else. I have also not had the United States be the Lone Ranger. We had the U.N. come in here. The United Nations has asked us to move, and we have all these other countries. And it is—this is senseless, and it needs to stop.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Bud Selig is the acting commissioner of baseball. Participating in the interview were Helen Thomas of United Press International, Terence Hunt of Associated Press, Gene Gibbons of Reuters, and Sophie Huet of Agence France-Presse.

Proclamation 6718—National POW/ MIA Recognition Day, 1994

September 14, 1994

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This year marks the 50th anniversary of America's participation in the largest single amphibious assault in history. Considered by many to be a turning point in the Second World War, the D-Day invasion at Normandy serves as a clear reminder of our Nation's long-standing commitment to fight for the principles of democracy and to defeat the forces of oppression.

We must always remember the dedication and sacrifice of our service men and women